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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (09/23): Palestinian press report
no change after yesterday's trilateral meeting in New York

Main Stories:

The trilateral meeting held yesterday in New York between President Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas receives prominent coverage in the local press. The dailies quote President Obama saying that the talks between the Israelis and Palestinians concerning final status issues must resume soon. President Obama also stated that the US is committed to achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, noting that "it is time to move forward." Obama called on Israel to take serious measures to halt settlement activity, and at the same time praised Israel's recent removal of over 100 dirt barriers in the West Bank, easing movement and access for the Palestinian people. President Abbas is quoted saying that Israel must withdraw to the 1967 borders and end the occupation in order to resume talks. Abbas also noted that Israel must respect all previously signed agreements regarding borders and Jerusalem, and called on the Israelis to halt all settlement activity, including East Jerusalem.

Al-Ayyam front pages news quoting Yasser Abed Rabbo, Secretary General of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee, saying that there was no decision made during the trilateral meeting to pursue talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. He explained in a phone call with Al-Ayyam from New York that the US will hold separate bilateral meetings with the two parties to assess the best way to restart the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

In related news, Palestinian officials including Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and Chief Negotiator Saeb Erekat talked to Al-Quds from New York after the trilateral meeting, saying that the negotiations

cannot be re-started unless settlement activities are completely halted. Erekat noted that Jerusalem must be one of the top priorities for any negotiations and stressed that Israel must withdraw to the 1967 borders. Erekat also stated that a clear time frame for the negotiations must be set and that the international community should support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Al-Quds front pages news citing DPA on Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh saying that Hamas will support any step that will result in the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. These remarks were stated in a letter Haniyeh sent to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon prior to the General Assembly meeting. In the letter, Haniyeh added that the "United States and Israel are responsible for not achieving any progress in the peace process."

Al-Ayyam and Al Quds run stories citing the Israeli daily Haaretz saying that the Israeli government recently endorsed the construction of a new settlement in Beitar Elite, south of Jerusalem.

In related news, Al-Ayyam front pages a report prepared by the PLO that details the Israeli tunnels and excavation works surrounding East Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Old City, along with a map that displays all the new housing units and settlements in the area.

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Al-Quds independent daily runs an editorial under the title "A Summit or Courteous Diplomacy to the US?" (09/23): "The trilateral summit was held yesterday ... however, any meeting of this type is held only as a diplomatic gesture to the US. It will not have any impact without a tangible change in Israeli positions. As long as the Israelis continue settlement activities and ignore their road map obligations, this meeting will be useless and will not serve the purpose of negotiations."

2) Ashraf Ajrami opines in Al-Ayyam independent daily under the title "The Trilateral Summit: The Only Choice in the Political Game" (09/23): "President Abbas' participation in the trilateral meeting can be justified, as Abu Mazen couldn't ignore the growing desire of the US to hold this meeting ... it would have been unrealistic for President Abbas not to give the US - and particularly President Obama - the chance to see what US intervention could lead to."

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